DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 383 862 CE 069 177

TITLE Guidelines for Effective Literacy Programs in Ontario. A Discussion Paper for Programs [and] Accountability Framework: Summary of Elements Developed for Consultation.
INSTITUTION Ontario Dept. of Education, Toronto.
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 39p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Standards; *Accountability; *Adult Literacy; Delivery Systems; Educational Opportunities; *Educational Quality; Evaluation Criteria; Evaluation Methods; Evaluation Needs; Financial Support; Foreign Countries; Guidelines; *Literacy Education; Models; Needs Assessment; Position Papers; Program Effectiveness; *Program Evaluation; Student Characteristics
IDENTIFIERS *Ontario

ABSTRACT

This document examines the major issues and implications related to the development of quality guidelines for adult literacy programs in Ontario (Canada) and presents a framework for discussing issues related to quality guidelines and their formulation. Discussed in the first section are the following topics: the place of quality issues/guidelines in the Ontario government's 1986 Plan for Adult Basic Literacy and the Ontario Ministry of Education's Adult Literacy Policy and Evaluation Project; the role of learners, service providers, and funders in the provision of adult literacy programs in Ontario; the purpose and scope of quality guidelines; and trends in the development and use of quality guidelines in the United Kingdom, other Canadian provinces, and the United States. The remaining 60% of the document is a discussion guide for stimulating thought and discussion about quality guidelines in adult literacy programming. It includes a discussion format and seven elements of quality in literacy programs (community focus, access to services, learner-centeredness, appropriate and effective service delivery, equity of outcomes, integration, and accountability). An accountability framework summarizing the elements of the quality guidelines consultation is included. (MN)

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ED 383 862

Guidelines for Effective Literacy Programs In Ontario

A Discussion Paper for Programs

— BOOK CODE # G108 —

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PREFACE

This paper is designed to outline major issues and implications related to the development of quality guidelines for literacy education programs in Ontario.

The discussion of quality guidelines is part of a multi-year project initiated by the Ontario Government to ensure that the province has a strong and effective literacy education program that adequately meets current and future needs of learners. The guidelines, when complete, will be part of a major policy initiative giving direction and purpose to the development and maintenance of high quality literacy programs.

The quality elements outlined in this paper are sketched within the context of the Ministry of Education's recently stated commitment:

> **"to enable all learners - children, youth and adults - to develop their full potential both as individuals and as contributing members of their community ..."**

The paper invites discussion as to what should go into quality guidelines and how these guidelines might be linked to an effective evaluation process.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of a conversation with the Ontario literacy community on what should go into a set of provincial program guidelines that would best meet the diverse and changing needs of learners. Those who participate in this conversation will be sharing in the task of building a quality framework that will guide the development and evaluation of literacy education programs in Ontario over the next decade.

1.1. The Plan for Adult Basic Literacy (1986)

The development of provincial quality guidelines is the most recent development in a process that began in September, 1986. At that time the Ontario Government announced its Plan for Adult Basic Literacy involving the coordination and expansion of literacy services across the province. The Plan acted as a catalyst, expanding the quantity and variety of literacy programs, providing additional information and funding resources, and building on a network of existing literacy services that marked the long history of the literacy movement in Ontario.

The result of these efforts was substantial. By the end of 1990 there were over 800 literacy programs being offered in Ontario by a wide range of government and non-government service providers. A variety of program arrangements and learning models were being offered, reflecting the social, educational, economic, civic, cultural and linguistic needs of learners. Now was the time to consolidate these gains and plan for the future.

By 1992 the Government of Ontario had dedicated $70 million to literacy. This was supplemented by additional funding provided by school boards. This commitment has generated considerable interest in establishing policies, quality guidelines and evaluation procedures that will ensure programs are effective and accountable in meeting the diverse and changing needs of learners.

1.2. The Adult Literacy Policy and Evaluation Project

The Ministry of Education has initiated the Adult Literacy Policy and Evaluation Project, designed to build on the program criteria outlined in the 1986 Action Plan. Responding to the need for stronger direction and greater accountability, the project will develop policies, principles and guidelines for program development and evaluation, in consultation with the literacy community.

1.3. Consultation

The Project includes an extensive consultation strategy that involves individual and group discussions with people in the literacy field, both in government and in the community. Included in the consultations are instructors, learners, program directors, specialists, and funders.

A Project Steering Committee has been formed, made up of representatives from the community and government who are leaders in the literacy field. The Steering Committee is chaired by the Director of the Literacy Branch, Ministry of Education. Various stages of the project involve the appointment of advisory groups made up of people with expertise in various aspects of literacy.

Consultative meetings have been held including instructors, learners, academics, service providers, representatives from government, labour and literacy coalitions, advocacy and coordinating groups, members of the Francophone and Aboriginal communities, and experts in the field of literacy.

This paper builds on the ideas arising from these prior consultations and is directed specifically to the development of quality guidelines. A group of advisors made up of people selected from the earlier consultations has assisted in its preparation.

2. THE CONTEXT OF LITERACY EDUCATION IN ONTARIO

Three principle players are involved in the provision of adult literacy programs; the learners, the service providers and the funders.

2.1 The Learners

In Ontario, we are dealing with an adult population whose learning needs and motivations vary according to where they live, their cultural background, facility with English or French, employment status, age, gender, social circumstances, previous learning, mature knowledge and experience and physical abilities. The challenge is to provide learning that fits with what adult learners already know and what they determine they need to know.

Many literacy programs have developed out of these special needs. For

example, people living in rural areas require different approaches to method and format than those living in large urban areas and small northern towns.

It is estimated that current programs reach only two to five percent of the people who could benefit from literacy education. Some of the people who are currently in literacy programs and those who potentially could benefit from these services include:

- people who have had unsuccessful experiences with their early education and now want to learn reading, writing and numeracy skills for personal satisfaction and growth
- people with disabilities who were previously excluded from conventional education, and now seek to recover that loss
- Franco-Ontarians who have unique language and community development needs for whom literacy education is perceived as an integral part of the cultural revitalization process
- Aboriginal peoples for whom the institutional education system is viewed as a process of assimilation, not amenable to their personal and cultural needs, and who consider literacy one way of recreating one's individual and social identification and regaining Aboriginal languages within a political context
- immigrants and refugees who seek to develop basic literacy skills that will help them to participate more fully in their community
- workers either underemployed or displaced in the rapidly changing labour market who require retraining; many of these being older workers and workers whose first language is neither English nor French
- single parents who seek access to education, training and employment in order to facilitate their economic independence from government financial support
- parents who require literacy to improve communication with their children and who wish to be more active in the education of their children
- people in conflict with the law who seek education and training to renew their lives
- seniors who seek to improve their literacy skills in order to enhance the quality of their lives

- people who desire to address their literacy needs through a specialized approach, e.g. family literacy or union-sponsored literacy, in accordance with a preferred set of values and goals.

2.2. The Service Providers

There is a long history of literacy education and advocacy in Ontario. Over the years, organizations such as the Y.M.C.A., Frontier College and the Women's Institute pioneered in literacy and took their programs to communities across Ontario. In the 1920's, the Ministry of Education began a distance program directed towards children in northern Ontario. Later this program extended its services to adults. Now called the Independent Learning Centre, this is the largest distance education institution in Canada.

Over the past decades the number and variety of literacy programs and methodologies in Ontario have increased. People wanting to develop literacy skills now have the option to attend programs offered by many different providers in many different locations. While some fee programs exist, most are free of charge.

People can choose one-on-one tutoring, small group or classroom instruction, computer-assisted learning and even learn in their homes with the use of audio cassettes and the telephone. While provision is still not even across all regions nor adequate for all groups, a solid foundation for future development has been established.

Seventy percent of literacy education in Ontario is provided by school boards. Other major providers include colleges, community-based agencies, Laubach Literacy Councils, private providers, ESL/FSL programs, libraries, unions and employers. Many of these providers work in partnerships with one another or have other mutually beneficial relationships.

In addition to program providers, there are coalitions and networks for English speaking, French speaking and Aboriginal literacy programs. For example, the Ontario Literacy Coalition provides information and resource support to literacy programs across Ontario and links with fourteen regional literacy networks in the province. Alpha Ontario is a literacy and language training resource centre serving the province in English and French and is linked into the National Adult Literacy Database. A French clearinghouse, *Le Centre Franco-Ontarien de Ressources en alphabétisation (FORA)* develops and publishes French language materials.

This variety of services and service providers is perceived as a positive characteristic of literacy education in Ontario. Learners have many doors of entry to meeting their particular motivations, needs and circumstances.

However, a by-product of diversity can be fragmentation. Fragmentation can be minimized through leadership and direction that encourages the different providers to work co-operatively with one another. A broad government literacy policy and strategy can work towards this end.

2.3. The Funders

Over the years literacy funding developed according to the widening recognition of literacy as a social, employment, educational and civic issue. The programs were often designed and funded in accordance with which specific issue was being addressed. For example, in the sixties and seventies, illiteracy was strongly associated with unemployment and colleges and community groups were co-funded by the federal and provincial governments to provide upgrading programs.

During the eighties, many provinces began to play a stronger role in adult literacy. With this shift came a stronger orientation towards citizenship and education. The result in Ontario was a rich diversity of literacy programs provided by a variety of government-sponsored and independent service providers.

Other ministries involved in literacy education include Citizenship, Colleges and Universities, Skills Development, Labour, Correctional Services and Community and Social Services.

Special project funding is also provided by the National Literacy Secretariat of the federal Secretary of State.

A concern shared by service providers is the current instability of program funding. This is said to contribute to a great deal of insecurity, short term planning, high staff turnover, and has been cited as a possible barrier to applying some of the elements of good practice that appear later in this paper.

Along with funding there has been expressed a need for greater accountability to ensure the effective use of limited resources. This reflects the public mood which has become more critical of government spending, while at the same time increasing its demand for service.

2.4. Current and Future Trends

The concept of literacy as a basic human right, an integral part of lifelong learning and an essential element of an individual's participation in a democratic society is becoming more widely accepted by the public.

Growing demands for education equity will place pressure on literacy programs to be accessible and responsive to the needs and interests of Aboriginal peoples, racial minorities, Franco-Ontarians, people with disabilities and women.

Language that is increasingly more complex will present an additional barrier for people with weak literacy skills. Increased efforts are needed to ensure that plain language is used in all public information and communication.

There will be additional pressure for literacy education to be incorporated into job training and employment programs. Today, the concept of the global economy, where business and industry are being pressed to compete internationally, is increasingly a driving force in government and business decision-making. A fully literate workforce is often cited as being essential to the province's economic success and to the ability of people to find stable employment.

Individuals will be especially challenged during a period of rapidly changing technology and economic restructuring. The status of workers will be in flux, as many of their traditional jobs change and require more complex language, writing, mathematical and computer skills. Increasingly literacy will become a priority issue for labour unions.

With increasing financial constraints on the community and government, there will be growing public pressure for literacy programs to operate within a climate of efficiency and accountability. While process and methodology will remain important factors, there will be increasing pressure to assess results.

Taking all the above factors into account, the challenge will be to consolidate past accomplishments and ensure stable growth in literacy education and, at the same time, maintain basic principles that have marked the historical development of literacy education in Ontario.

3. QUALITY GUIDELINES

This paper is designed to raise some critical questions to be considered in

determining elements that would be included in a guide for effective literacy programs across the province. In looking at standards there is a need to strike a balance between what is ideal but unattainable and what is realistic but not sufficiently challenging. Guidelines will need to be realistic and relevant to the changing needs of learners and communities.

While quality may seem to be an elusive goal in times of economic constraint, the quality guide can nevertheless provide goals towards which service providers can strive in these difficult times. Accountability is even more essential when funds are limited.

3.1 Why Do We Need Quality Guidelines?

- **To identify and encourage good practices in literacy education that serve the needs and aspirations of learners**
- **To provide guidance and direction for new programs**
- **To encourage and support innovative approaches to teaching and service that can provide models of practice in the field**
- **To have a basis for reviewing the effectiveness of programs in achieving program goals and the goals of the people they serve, and using the review process to make improvements and adjustments**
- **To provide continuity over time and strengthen linkages between literacy program providers and other relevant educational and service systems**
- **To maintain an information base that will assist in planning for the future**

The paper outlines a set of quality elements for consideration. Such elements would provide a provincial framework for service providers within which they could develop their own more detailed guidelines in accordance with their values, goals and particular needs of the learners they serve.

The objective is to ensure that the existing diversity is retained, to assess and consolidate what has been already achieved and to plan for the future development of literacy in Ontario.

3.2. What Do We Mean by Quality Guidelines?

Quality guidelines can be likened to a map. Not all details of the landscape are

evident, but enough is outlined to enable the traveller to keep a bearing and reach a pre-determined destination. The destination is the vision for the future. Quality guidelines have the potential to lead to the full realization of that vision.

Through on-going dialogue between government and the community, there is potential for the guidelines to be:

- dynamic and subject to the changing needs of learners and the community over time;
- inclusive, allowing for a variety of philosophies, values, goals, structures and strategies;
- respectful of and building on quality standards and program evaluation procedures already in place so that program effectiveness can be assessed and improved;
- flexible and open to differences in the context of various neighbourhoods and communities of interests, where variations such as family literacy and community development are encouraged and supported; and
- cohesive, drawing together common values and strategies relating to literacy education.

3.3 Quality Guidelines in Other Jurisdictions

A survey of what is happening outside of Ontario indicates that there is growing interest in developing guidelines for effective programming. While "good practice" guidelines have been operational in the U.K. for nearly a decade, it appears that Canada and the United States are just now moving in this direction.

Four jurisdictions were selected for review in the preparation of this paper; Massachusetts, the U.K., Quebec and British Columbia. These jurisdictions were selected because they had already published some form of guidelines, and represented different approaches. All appear to have adopted the UNESCO functional definition of adult literacy that views literacy as enabling a person to participate in all aspects of social, economic and political life. What is different between these jurisdictions is how this definition is interpreted and applied.

The U.S. Department of Education has developed a set of "Quality Standards for Adult Education Programs" that includes literacy. The states have been advised to follow these guidelines. Massachusetts has developed its own process that

is linked to funding. The focus is on employment-related programs, although a variety of providers with other orientations are included in the framework. The model provides a range of mandatory and discretionary benchmarks for evaluating programs. The system is complex and is not yet fully operative.

The U.K. provides literacy primarily through school councils and develops guides for good practice and evaluation. There appears, however, to be no extensive monitoring of how these guides are followed.

Quebec has centralized and standardized the provision of literacy programs, provided primarily through school boards. It has taken a "customized training" approach to programming and has developed an extensive guide supporting this model. However, the model is only in the first stages of implementation, and has yet to be evaluated.

In B.C. the provincial government has published a set of program and evaluation guidelines for adult literacy volunteer tutors. However, compliance with these guidelines is not obligatory and program results are not monitored. Literacy programs are provided primarily through the community college system.

None of the models surveyed seem to fit the Ontario experience. In Ontario a multi-delivery approach has been fostered that does not lend itself to centralized control. The Ontario experience is diversified and oriented towards local communities. There is no dominant orientation, i.e. social, economic, political or educational. It is likely that quality guidelines and evaluation procedures in Ontario will build on the positive aspects of this experience, forming a unique model that balances local autonomy and public accountability.

3.4 How Will Programs Comply With Guidelines And Be Evaluated?

There will likely be a need to have different sets of guidelines and evaluation procedures for different delivery systems. For example, Francophone and Aboriginal program providers have identified special needs that would need to be reflected in their evaluation criteria and procedures.

In most cases it might be preferable to hold service providers accountable for their own evaluation criteria and procedures, so long as they reflect the overall policy and evaluation requirements of the government. There may also be a role for local literacy networks to provide information, training and guidance in this process.

Issues around models of compliance and evaluation will likely become a larger

part of the discussion as the Literacy Project proceeds.

4. DISCUSSION GUIDE

4.1. How To Use This Guide

This section of the paper is designed specifically as a guide to stimulate thought and provide a basis for discussion. The guide is not intended to be definitive or prescriptive.

Seven elements of good practice are offered for consideration. The elements reflect the vision for adult literacy in Ontario that was formulated by the Policy Work Group in the fall of 1991 (Phase I of the Ministry of Education's Adult Literacy Policy and Evaluation Project). They constitute the first level of discussion in this paper.

The next level of discussion revolves around how the quality elements selected might be implemented. A number of examples are offered. These are accompanied by sets of questions designed to generate discussion.

The third level of discussion relates to a general set of questions regarding the setting and implementing of quality guidelines, and the implications of this process.

4.2. Quality Elements

Quality elements highlighted in this paper reflect basic principles of adult literacy education identified by the Policy Work Group. They also reflect the principles outlined in the 1986 ABL Plan and the Ontario Ministry of Education Statement of Beliefs.

Further consultation with representatives of the community and government, and a review of the literature and working models have further contributed to the selection of these elements for review and discussion.

It is suggested that literacy programs across the province would benefit from having a set of quality elements or principles that would provide them with guidance and a sense of direction. Then, each program within this overall context would determine their own approach to maintaining quality standards.

One part of the discussion involved in this paper is a review of these elements and a definition of what they mean. Obviously the question goes further and asks if these elements are adequate and what other elements might be considered.

4.3. Examples of Quality Programming

The seven Quality Elements are accompanied by selected examples of good practice quality programming, followed by questions for discussion. Examples and issues offered come from community and government consultations, a search of the literature and from model guidelines used in other jurisdictions.

The examples offered are suggestions of how a program might apply the element or principle that has been highlighted. The questions that are listed after each set of examples raise some of the issues that might be considered when implementing a particular quality element. Other issues will likely enter into the discussions that will take place.

The seven quality elements can apply to all components of program provision, not just those presented in the examples. For example a learner-centred/driven approach could be applied to the development of program goals, orientation procedures, staff training and program review.

It should be noted that not all of the examples offered may be appropriate for all programs. It is not being suggested that programs should be all things to all people. Some service providers will offer specialized programs for specific target groups. It is also recognized that the quality elements and the examples offered are not new, but are already operative in many literacy programs across Ontario.

5. DISCUSSION FORMAT

5.1. Elements of Quality in Literacy Programs

Seven elements are presented for consideration as being characteristic of good practice in an adult literacy education program.

A quality adult literacy program will strive to contain the following elements.

1. **Community focus:** a sensitivity to and affirmation of a geographic

community and/or community of interests, that is relevant to the needs and aspirations of learners and potential learners. It ensures that there is a community perspective in the planning, content and evaluation of the program.

Even when programs involve independent, distance or computer assisted learning, the community context relating to the individual learner can still be relevant.

An orientation towards community encourages sharing of information and resources within a community. It also strengthens partnerships where there is a benefit from shared responsibility for the program.

2. **Access to Services:** a pro-active approach to providing service to people for whom the program has been designed. This involves imaginative outreach and promotion activities and an effective referral service for those who cannot be served by the program.

   Factors that act as barriers to access include fear of learning, social stigma attached to literacy education, lack of wheelchair access and stereotyped beliefs about learners.

   Access is enhanced for some learners when programs are highly visible, while for others discrete locations are more attractive. This means that storefront operations, classroom situations, home tutoring or distance education arrangements all contribute to making a program more accessible

3. **Learner-centred/driven:** an involvement of learners as equal partners with service providers, sharing responsibility for determining and achieving their learning objectives. The focus is on needs of the learners, not the program. Programs with this orientation respect decisions made by learners and view both learners and instructors as contributors to the learning process.

   The adult learners' needs are perceived from a holistic perspective as a member of a family, social or cultural group, community or workplace, where learning complements these relationships.

4. **Appropriate and Effective Service Delivery:** involves adequate staffing, staff training and experience, as well as instruction methods that ensure that people are provided with a good learning experience. Learning

methods and approaches are used that are consistent with the view of adult learners as active, inquiring participants in the learning process.

Principles of adult education apply where learning is perceived as an active and critical search for meaning.

Instructors and tutors are trained formally and on-the-job so that they are skilled literacy and numeracy education facilitators. While teaching staff need not have teaching accreditation, they demonstrate that they have acquired a body of knowledge and skills both in theory and in practice in the field of teaching literacy and numeracy to adults.

5. **Equity of Outcome:** respects differences. The goal is not to treat everyone the same way or to have the same objectives and results for all learners, but to ensure appropriate supports are in place so learners have a real opportunity to achieve their goals.

   It allows for separate programs that are specifically designed for disadvantaged groups and for programs that integrate these groups into the mainstream, depending on the preferences of the learners in these groups; i.e. Aboriginals, people with disabilities, women, visible minorities and Francophones.

   Equity of outcome promotes equality and respect for diversity among its paid staff, volunteers and learners and acknowledges that where people are members of a group or community that has experienced inequity, special interventions may be a needed.

6. **Integration:** provides essential linkages between programs while allowing for the independence of multiple providers and diversity in programming. This includes information sharing networks, sharing of resources, bridging programs and where appropriate, a continuum of program delivery where learners are able to move progressively towards their established goals.

   Integration can also refer to the need for a literacy program to be an integral part of the adult education provided within an institution, educational system or community of related services.

7. **Accountability:** involves a public accounting of the business management of the program to ensure efficient and effective management, and

accountability to the learners for the appropriateness and effectiveness of the program.

Quality programs establish clear organizational and program goals, identify qualitative and quantitative indicators for achieving these goals and measure and report results on a regular basis.

The application of quality elements will vary according to the particular requirements of each service provider and learner group.

<u>Some Issues for Discussion:</u>

- **Are the above elements adequate and appropriately defined for setting quality standards for adult literacy programs in Ontario?**
- **Are additional elements needed, and if so, what would these be?**

5.2. Review of Implications of Suggested Quality Elements

1. Community focus: sensitivity to and affirmation of a geographic community and/or community of interests, relevant to the needs and aspirations of learners and potential learners.

For example, a quality program:

Outreach interacts with communities relevant to current and potential learners for whom the program is designed and ensures the program remains sensitive and responsive to the community-related needs of learners.

Collaboration works in collaboration with local and regional resources and networks to plan programs and share resources, for example, Help Centres, social services, regional literacy networks and Labour Councils.

Responds to needs identified by members of the community and offers programs that are sensitive to the values of the community.

Co-ordination co-ordinates efforts with other literacy programs to avoid fragmentation and unnecessary competition.

Referrals becomes knowledgeable about literacy and other services in the community so that effective referrals to alternate programs and services can be made.

Some issues for discussion:

- What are some of the characteristics of a program that has a community orientation or focus?
- Are there barriers that make it difficult for programs to incorporate the community-related needs of learners into their programs?
- What factors enhance constructive partnerships and collaborative efforts between service providers within a community? Are there effective models?

- **Do the above examples address the issues raised?**
- **What other examples might be suggested?**

2. Access to Services: a pro-active approach to providing service to people for whom the program has been designed.

For example, a quality program:

Promotion and Recruitment	actively reaches out into neighbourhoods, using appropriate and diverse methods and media to heighten public awareness of the program, to attract a diverse range of potential learners and to promote public support for literacy education.
Location	secures a location that is convenient and physically accessible.
Scheduling	provides flexible schedules and duration of training in an effort to accommodate work, family and travelling requirements.
Attitude	creates a positive welcoming environment where staff affirm that everyone can learn no matter how challenged.
Confidentiality	ensures people are not afraid of entering the program by assuring confidentiality is maintained unless permission for disclosure is granted by the learner.
Support Services	makes support services available to learners including provision of counselling and referral services and assistance with quality child care and transportation. Where services are not feasible within the program, it links with existing community and government resources.

Some Issues for Discussion:

- What are some of the hidden obstacles that prevent people from coming into a program and how can these be addressed?
- What factors encourage programs to actively recruit a broad range of learners?
- How can service deliverers be sensitized to a diversity of

learners so that everyone is genuinely encouraged and made to feel welcome?

- Do the above examples address the issues raised?
- What other examples might be suggested?

3. Learner-centred/driven: an involvement of learners as partners with service providers, sharing responsibility for determining and achieving their learning objectives.

For example, a quality program:

Orientation has clearly stated philosophy, values, goals, objectives, anticipated program outcomes and instruction options that are shared in plain language with the learner prior to enrolment, ensuring that these are fully understood and in harmony with the learner's own stated goals and objectives.

Environment provides a physical and emotional environment that is welcoming, supportive, comfortable and encouraging to each learner, providing space, resources and services appropriate to the diverse personal and cultural needs of participants in the program.

Assessment/ Student Evaluation uses a variety of flexible, non-threatening, learner-centred/driven qualitative and quantitative assessment processes, well aligned to the goals of the learner and the program. Prior learning, both formal and informal, is recognized and affirmed.

Learners receive regular feedback on their progress to enable them to make decisions, adjust their goals and, if necessary, to seek appropriate supplementary assistance or referral to an alternative program.

Learner Participation encourages learners to participate on boards and committees related to the direction of the program.

Decision Making acknowledges learners as owners of their learning goals and as equal partners in making choices about instruction methods, materials and practical arrangements.

Where learners make choices that are not consistent with what the program can provide, learners share in decisions regarding referral to programs that they perceive to be more

in line with their needs.

Instruction — uses a variety of instructional media and methods appropriate for adults and relevant to the varied needs of individual learners, integrating their previously acquired knowledge and skills with what is to be learned in the program, and reflecting different learning styles and cultural backgrounds.

Curriculum — uses curriculum relevant to the context of the learner's own environment, coming from the experiences of the learners themselves.

Some Issues For Discussion:

- What are some of the characteristics of learner-centred/driven learning?
- What are some of the barriers to learner-centred/driven learning?
- Do the above examples address the issues raised?
- What other examples might be suggested?

4. Appropriate and Effective Service Delivery: involves staffing and instruction methods that ensure that people are provided with a learning experience that best serves their needs and goals. Learning methods and approaches are used that are consistent with the view of adult learners as active, inquiring participants in the learning process. Trained and experienced instructors and tutors facilitate the learning experience.

For example, a quality program:

Adult Learning Perspective	incorporates a perception of adult literacy education as an integral part of lifelong learning, and learning as just one part of a total life experience. The learning program has a culture that respects both the learners and the instructors as sources of knowledge and understanding.
Instruction	adopts a range of strategies for working with learners to assist in the mastering of text and emphasizes the nature and goal of reading and writing as an active search for meaning. facilitates the learning of reading and writing for specific purposes and provides an opportunity for personal and collective expression of experience, understanding and views. facilitates the building of numeracy skills in ways which foster intuitive and logical understanding of quantity and proportion, which can be applied for practical and abstract purposes.
Teacher/ Student Ratio	provides an adequate instructor/tutor-student ratio, counsellors and other support people, contact hours and resources to ensure the services are best suited to the needs of individual learners, not to the needs of the program.
Qualified Staff	employs staff with experience and training in the field of adult literacy. Where volunteer tutors are used, the program provides qualified experienced staff to design the program and provide training and support.
Training	provides on-going training for all paid and volunteer staff, to ensure that teaching skills keep up with developments in the

field, the program content evolves and improves, and best management practices are employed.

Volunteers uses volunteers appropriately to enhance and enrich the program, as tutors, trainers, spokespeople for the community, and as participants on boards, committees and advisory councils.

Evaluation conducts ongoing, vigorous evaluation in collaboration with each learner to review goals, acknowledge achievements and set targets for remaining areas of learning. Program evaluation includes learner satisfaction as a measure of success.

Some Issues for Discussion:

- What are some characteristics of a learning model that encourages participants to be active critical learners?
- How can we ensure that paid and volunteer instructors/tutors are adequately trained?
- What are the potential benefits and disadvantages of providing special accreditation for adult literacy instructors?
- Do the above examples address the issues raised?
- What other examples might be suggested?

5. Equity of Outcome: respects differences. The goal is not to treat everyone in the same way or to have the same objectives and results for all learners. Rather, the objective is to have everyone benefit equally from the program and to remove barriers to equality.

For example, a quality program:

Cultural Diversity	recognizes needs of a variety of cultural, linguistic and racial groups and ensures that they are appropriately accommodated in the design, format and content and staffing of the program.
Special Measures	ensures that all participants have equal access to the resources of the program, with special measures being taken as needed. For example, people with disabilities may need physical accommodation or assistive devices to gain access to the program. Appropriate learning materials and equipment are used to ensure their ability to meet learning goals.

Some Issues for Discussion:

- What are some of the obstacles faced by programs in their efforts to provide equity of outcome?
- What is the difference between equity of access and equity of outcome?
- Do the above examples adequately address equity of outcome?
- What other examples might be needed?

6. Integration: recognizes diversity and specialization within the context of the whole, and sees literacy for the individual as an integral part of lifelong learning and literacy education as an integral part of adult education.

For example, a quality program:

Linkages	makes linkages with other adult education programs in order to keep the literacy program a vital part of the community.
Learning Continuum	recognizes the long-term educational goals of participants and integrates these into the program through the development of bridging programs that facilitate the entry of learners to other levels of learning.
Partnerships	creates mutually beneficial partnerships between community-based non-profit organizations, learning institutions, social services, unions and employers to ensure that constructive linkages develop within a particular geographic, linguistic or cultural community.

Some Issues for Discussion:

- What do we mean by integration?
- What are the barriers to integration?
- What are some models of integration that work?
- Do the above examples address integration?
- What other examples might be needed?

7. Accountability: Involves a public accounting of the training and financial management of the program to ensure principles of efficiency and effectiveness have been applied.

For example, a quality program:

Planning	has a clear mission statement, established goals and an action plan for implementing these goals. Based on these goals anticipated program results are developed, indicators of achievement established, and results are monitored.
Administration	is well managed, operationally and financially, maintaining accurate records and statistics and employing high standards in human resource management.
Program Objectives	establishes program goals and objectives in accordance with the values and philosophy of the organization, all of which are clearly understood by staff and shared with learners.
Financial Management	ensures program is managed to ensure quality, efficiency and continuity within available funding.
Program Review	regularly reviews its goals and program effectiveness, soliciting input from staff, learners and external sources to maintain program vitality and relevance.
Program Development	has an on-going system of testing and evaluating new approaches to instruction and student assessment, so that the program is continuously evolving and growing.

Issues for Discussion:

- How can program review be given priority during a period of rising demand for services and increasing budget restraints?
- How can programs best be accountable to both the public and the learners they serve?

- **Do the above examples address accountability issues?**
- **What other examples might be suggested?**

5.3. Some Further Issues to Consider

The following questions raise some general issues and require special consideration to ensure that quality guidelines enhance past achievements as well as stimulate new innovations. The questions are not listed in order of priority.

1. **Who should be responsible for establishing quality guidelines and monitoring and assessing the results?**

2. **How can indicators of quality be kept simple, clear and feasible?**

3. **What measures are needed to respond to the growing demand for literacy programs, within the limits of available resources?**

4. **How can quality guidelines be designed to enhance innovation and diversity and not be restrictive in their impact?**

5. **How can quality guidelines be used to maintain a balance between increasing pressures to focus on employment and the continuing need to address the social, civic, cultural and educational aspects of literacy?**

6. **How can guidelines that encourage quality, diversity and innovation be linked to an effective evaluation process?**

7. **How can quality guidelines enhance the recognition of literacy instructors and tutors as qualified adult educators and maintain the essential contribution of trained volunteer tutors?**

8. **Assuming funding remains limited and the demand for literacy programs continues to increase, what practical compromises and qualifications might be built into the quality guidelines to ensure that they are feasible? What should be the priorities? What cannot be compromised?**

6. SUMMARY

The issues being addressed in this paper are complex and require extensive deliberation. It is hoped that this effort will stimulate dialogue and discussion on the content of provincial guidelines, approaches to their implementation, and options for monitoring and reviewing their results.

These guidelines, when complete, should ensure that the best achievements in quality and diversity are retained, that further development is encouraged, and that literacy programs in Ontario have built in factors for assessment and accountability.

ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Summary of Elements

Developed for Consultation

Book Code # E 111

ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK

Summary of Elements Developed for Consultation

1. Definition of Literacy

1.1 Literacy is the ability to read, write, calculate, speak, sign and understand as well as communicate in other symbolic forms of language.[1]

1.2 Literacy education is part of a process or cycle of lifelong learning, based on life experience, shared knowledge, and decision-making by learners. Literacy education contributes to the development of individual self-esteem and critical awareness as well as individual and community empowerment.

2. Guiding Principles

2.1 Respect for Racial and Cultural Diversity

2.1.1 We promote racial and cultural diversity in literacy education.

2.1.2 We encourage staffing of programs to reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the communities which they serve and support the right of communities to create flexible programs which meet the needs of their diverse population.

2.1.3 We recognize the right of Ontarians to literacy education in:

- one of Canada's official languages, or
- language of origin for Aboriginal peoples.

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[1] "Other symbolic forms of language" refers to Blissymbols and other systems of communication used by people with disabilities.

2.1.4 We support the right of Aboriginal peoples to be literate in their own languages as well as in English or French. This affirms the revitalization of Aboriginal culture and the authority of Aboriginal people to determine their literacy needs and programs.

2.1.5 We ensure that literacy in French will be directed by Franco-Ontarians and that the linguistic and cultural needs of the Franco-Ontarian population will be recognized in all provincial literacy programs. We recognize the intrinsic role of literacy as a means of survival and empowerment for the Franco-Ontarian community.

2.1.6 We affirm the need of Ontarians to literacy education in their first language, in order to ensure a bridge to English as a Second Language (ESL) or Actualisation linguistique en français (ALF).

2.2 Lifelong Learning and Adult Education

2.2.1 We recognize adult literacy education as fundamental to any future framework on lifelong learning and adult education in Ontario. Our learning system must be adaptable, so that learning can occur where, when, and in the ways it is needed.

2.3 Belief in Learners

2.3.1 We recognize the knowledge, experience, and life skills of learners as an integral part of literacy education.

2.3.2 We consider learners to be partners in service planning and program decision-making. New ideas are welcomed and all play a meaningful role in setting new directions.

2.4 Adequate and Appropriate Service Provision

2.4.1 We recognize that funding should be consistent with our objectives.

2.4.2 We recognize that there are different processes of learning and different organizations which provide learning opportunities. We promote a diverse public non-profit community-based literacy network to provide for flexibility in learning opportunities and to support the full range of learner needs.

2.4.3 We recognize training for all those participating in the literacy field as a priority.

2.4.4 We encourage all programs to accommodate the special access needs of people with disabilities, including the provision of equitable delivery and support services.

2.5 Integrated Services

2.5.1 We promote programs which meet the needs of learners in an integrated way.

2.5.2 We advocate that support services should be available to the learner, not tied to a program, in order to encourage co-operation and co-ordination between programs and services.

2.5.3 We advocate special bridging initiatives to increase timely referrals as well as to promote links between programs.

2.5.4 We promote partnerships between the Ministry of Education and Training and program providers as well as between program providers and learners.

3. Vision Statement

3.1 We recognize the right of all to literacy education.

3.2 The Ministry of Education and Training will support a commitment by all sectors of society to provide access to literacy in order to increase adult literacy in Ontario by the year 2000.

4. Objectives

To be developed.

5. Strategies

To be developed.

6. Core Quality Standards

Preamble to the Core Quality Standards

Common Understandings

- Evaluation will be used to help programs improve.
- We believe that programs need stable, adequate funding. Evaluation will be done in the context of the financial, human, and professional resources available.

Core Standards from the Work Group

6.1 Program Mission

A quality literacy program has clearly written goals and a philosophy which it follows and shares with the people involved in the program.

6.2 Practitioner[2] Training

A quality literacy program has well-trained workers. They have initial and on-going training.

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[2] A "practitioner" is someone who is a literacy co-ordinator, instructor, tutor or teacher, either paid or volunteer.

6.3 Community Focus

A quality literacy program is rooted in the community[3] it serves. Learners take part in decisions that affect them and their communities. The program reflects its own goals and strengthens individuals, their communities and their cultural identity.

6.4 Learner-Centred Approaches and Methods

A quality literacy program uses approaches and methods that are learner-centred. It supports learners to participate individually and collectively in order to take control of their learning.

6.5 Access and Equity of Outcome

A quality literacy program respects differences. It has structures and supports in place to increase access and equitable outcomes[4] for learners.

6.6 Learner Mobility

A quality literacy program has the community, organizational, and referral links it needs to help learners move successfully from one educational program to another, to further training, and to employment.

6.7 Support Services

A quality literacy program helps learners get the support services they need, either in the program or in the community. These services include transportation, childcare, counselling and referral.

6.8 Organizational Links

A quality literacy program makes and maintains contact with organizations in the community which help meet both the learners' and the program's goals.

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[3] A "community" may be defined as a geographic area or as a particular target group.

[4] Programs have "equitable outcomes" when they make sure learners receive what they need in order to achieve results at the same level as other learners of similar ability and in other target groups.

6.9 Learning Objectives

A quality literacy program values, plans for and provides opportunities for learners to increase literacy and numeracy skills, life skills, critical thinking and problem-solving. The program recognizes that increasing self-esteem and empowerment are part of this developmental process.

6.10 Learner Assessment and Program Evaluation

A quality literacy program does on-going evaluation. Evaluation of learners' progress and of the program is a formative[5], participatory and continuous process. The goal of program evaluation is to increase effectiveness.

6.11 Learning Materials

A quality literacy program uses a wide variety of learning materials which are consistent with the program's philosophy, suitable for adults, and relevant to learners' needs. Programs use materials which promote equality of all groups in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code[6].

6.12 Outreach

A quality literacy program uses positive, effective, and targeted outreach strategies to attract learners to the program.

Additional Core Standards for Review

6.13 Diverse Outcomes

A quality literacy program strives for diverse outcomes. The program can specify and document the outcomes it expects to achieve and the extent to which it meets its outcomes.

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[5] "Formative evaluation" is ongoing, continuous and integrated into the daily functions of the literacy program. It is dynamic. Programs continually improve themselves based upon findings from an evaluation.

[6] The Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, handicap, age, marital status, family status, receipt of public assistance, and record of offenses.

6.14 Accountability

The program does what it says it will do. It has accountability to its learners, sponsoring organization, partners, community, and funders.

6.15 Respect for Learners

There is a good rapport between learners, practitioners, and others in the organization. A supportive learning environment, respect for learner's privacy as individuals, and positive feed-back on achievements are objectives of the program.

6.16 Contact Hours[7]

The frequency and duration of a program may vary according to learner needs and goals. Each participant in a literacy program is offered a minimum of four hours of instruction with staff or tutors per week.

6.17 Ratio of Learners to Instructors

The learner/instructor ratio is appropriate to learners' needs, levels, and mode of instruction.

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March 30, 1993

[7] A "contact hour" is the time a learner spends with an instructor, tutor or teacher. This time may be either in a one-on-one or group situation.